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## Educating film audience through social cognitive theory reciprocal model

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to determine the relationship between the reciprocal model factor of the Social Cognitive Theory and the level of film exposure among the audience. 1028 respondents from among adolescent film audience are selected through stratified random sampling. This research employs a cross-sectional survey method through the distribution of questionnaires as research instrument. The data obtained is analysed by using Pearson Correlation test and Multiple Regression test. Research results find that there exists a significant relation between independent and dependent variables. Further, personal and environment factors are significant predictive factors of film exposure among the audience.

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**Keywords:** Film audience, influence, Reciprocal model, Social Cognitive Theory, prosocial behaviour

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### 1. Introduction

The audience is an important element in the field of mass media which contributes to the success of a media product. The change in attitude of the audience from passive to active makes the audience a selective entity with the

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power to determine their own choice of media (Garamone, 1984; Jensen dan Rosengren, 1990; Clifford, 2005; Mastura, 2005). According to Mastura (2005), new technology evolution such as radio, film and television, internet TV, mobile TV and internet, has created various kinds of audiences such as film audience, television audience and so on.

A film audience which chooses to watch a film have their own varied notions of the film frequently associated with an option display of different film themes and genre. Films of such genres mostly achieve the level of box office hit and become the adulation and phenomenon of local film audience. Frequently, the showing of popular episodes and dialogue, fashion and main characters themselves become their idolized icons. This shows the role played by films as motion and talking pictures to be an easy influence on the audience in comparison to other kinds of media. This is admitted by Sujiah (2009) who states that whether the audience absorbs the positive or negative elements of what they view is beyond anyone's control. According to Bandura (2001) an audience exposed to mass media such as television and films will obtain the values and standards through imitation of others' behaviour. Thus, what is displayed in films influences audience understanding concerning an issue or phenomenon which occurs around them.

## **2. Purpose of Research**

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) highlights psychological change from media effect through the reciprocal model factor. The reciprocal interaction concept of SCT contributes to behavioural change in an individual who directly exposes himself to film media. This research discusses three key factors which have a triadic reciprocal relationship, namely, personal factor, environmental factor and behavioural factor which operate and interact as determinants influencing each other. The aim of this research is to determine the relationship between the reciprocal model factor of the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the level of film exposure among the audience. This research also studies these three factors as contributing to the level of film exposure among the audience.

## **3. Literature Review**

Mastura (2005) is of the opinion that an audience has a vast array of characters. Audience character is regarded as very important to the media industry, particularly to the media practitioner or code producer (producer, director and others). This group will attempt to identify the element to determine what should be produced and what will fulfill audience preferences or taste. Audience background, gender and ethnic groups are the main factors in contributing to differences in ways of understanding and interpreting media text messages which will ultimately influence the pattern and effect from viewing (McQuail, 2000). Hakemulder (2007) explains the ability of a film audience to interpret the text of a film work. This is supported by researches on films (Ellis, 2001; Derne and Jadwin, 2000; Abdul Wahab, 2003) which agree that a film may communicate with an audience through screened text. Episodes in a film also depict the experiences which may be understood by the audience. Hence, a film may communicate emotions through audience identification with the experience of the character acted.

Damico (2007) stated that films have a unique influences on individuals. Some adolescent groups thought that violence and sexual elements that they watched from the television were for entertainment purposes only. Damico (2007) also talked about the effects of media including films that influenced teens on how to socialize, dress up and make a decision. The social cognitive theory besides explaining on the learning concept and modeling of the environment (Bandura 1996; Bandura 1989), individuals and people around them will also be linked to the same influence and effects of the media (O'Rourke 2006; Bandura 2004; Bandura 2001). Message from the media is one factor that creates the learning and observing process. A person can monitor and another person's behaviour and practice the same behaviour to their daily life (Severin & Tankard 2010; Miller 2005).

It can be understood that a film audience is an important component as a contributory factor to the success of a film. Messages obtained from viewing films will influence and cause changes and effects on ways of thinking and short-term or even long-term behaviour. Hence, the film audience is an important decoder in the delivery process of mass communication information regarding the film screened. Most of film viewers today are active in

assigning meanings, interpreting and evaluating a film according to different perceptions. This builds up a paradigm of audience views on films and reality of life obtainable from films.

#### 4. Research Theory

Basically, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) discusses social behavioural changes based on the interaction concept of reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2001). There are three key factors which have a reciprocal relationship, namely, personal, environment and behaviour factors (Diagram 1) (Bandura, 1978; Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2001) which operate and interact as determinant factors and influence one another.

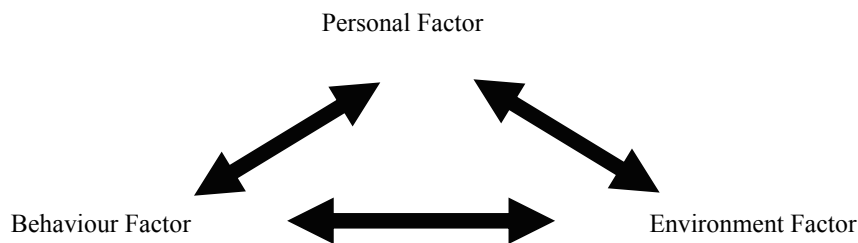


Fig. 1. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory Reciprocal Model

According to Bandura (1986), behaviour is shaped through a reinforcement of social context. This shows that people can think and arrange their own behaviour and not influenced by the environment. The surrounding factors did not cause any changes in behaviour only because the personal and environment factors are interrelated.

Bandura (1986 & 2001) explains the personal factor which covers cognition, emotions, perceptions, notions as well as internal knowledge which affect self-efficacy as an intervening factor of behaviour. The environment factor shapes the interaction involving the source of model representation and social norms of the community which may influence other people. The behaviour factor includes all actions, choice of decisions and verbal expressions of an individual through his skills and practice (Bandura, 2001; Antley, 2010). Bandura (1986) argues that cognition plays a role in determining the level of self-efficacy and shapes individual behaviour which may control the environment. Likewise, environment may also have an influence on behaviour formation.

Understanding behaviour formation in SCT is directly related to personal, environment and behaviour factors. The reciprocal model is the basic principle in the analysis of psychosocial phenomena in the development of human behaviour. As example, an individual's behaviour may be determined by controlling the environment factor. Similarly, behaviour may be controlled by the strength of environmental influence (Antley, 2010; Bandura, 2001). This explains relationship as a factor which affects interaction among the three determinant factors in behaviour formation. The personal factor of an individual is closely related with the cognitive process which may influence his own behaviour.

Man does not only master the skill of experience sourced from direct information based purely on the level of his self-efficacy but there are also expectations acquired from vicarious experience (Bandura, 1977). Hence, even though the SCT is generally related to human behaviour, Bandura also connects this theory with the theory of media effects. Bandura (2001) states that children and adults also acquire the attitudes, emotions, perceptions as well as new styles through media modeling. SCT explains how children acquire new behaviour from viewing media character on the screen (Wilson, 2008).

In SCT, man learns through role models. By the concept of role model a human becomes an example and

learning to do something is by looking and imitating someone else. This theory also explains that someone may also learn not to do something by looking at some other's behaviour (Severin & Tankard, 2010). Identification is a mechanism by which the audience experience and interpret what they went through if what they viewed also happened in their own lives (Basil, 1996) (in Cohen, 2001) and Maccoby & Wilson, 1957) (in Barker, 2005). The audience feel that they are close to the characters and understand what had been acted out, particularly involving emotions such as episodes of stress from suffering, drama or crisis, as if the audience feel and understand the characters.

## 5. Research Methodology

This study is designed using a cross-sectional survey through stratified random sampling procedure. Five public universities at the Klang Valley (UPM, UIA, UM, UKM and UiTM) with six programmes offered media, communication and films were chosen as the location to choose the samples randomly. There are 1028 respondents have been chosen by using the stratified random sampling technique by taking care sampling frame that is heterogenous from the overall population of 3324. Researcher used respondents randomly from each layer where all elements in the population were put aside according to the sampling location. 1028 respondents comprising of adolescent film audience with a background in media and communications at a public institution of higher learning in Malaysia are selected for this research. The size of the research sample accords with the suggestions of Cohen et al. (2007) using a 95% level of confidence with 5% confidence intervals. The sample size determination is referring to the Cohen et al. Sampling Size Table (2007). It was done one by one with involving six research different locations. After the total for each sample for each location was determined, systematic random sampling was used as the second sampling technique to choose respondents from each sub-group involved.

Chua (2006) and Neuman (2006) explained that the quality of research is depending on the samples. The findings obtained from the correct value of research samples through probability sampling could be generalised to the whole population. Good samples are samples that could represent variables from the population (Noraini, 2010; Gray, 2009). Hence, this study took into account samples that could be generalised to the whole population.

Six enumerators have been chosen and trained to help in distributing the questionnaires quickly and efficiently. The enumerators were chosen based on the suitability of the location. Therefore, six locations covering five public institutions need six different enumerators.

Data is collected through distribution of questionnaires and analysed by Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression tests using SPSS 21.0 software.

## 6. Research Findings and Discussion

### Demographic Profile

There were 1028 respondents involved in this study (Table 1) where 30.4 percent were from male respondents and 69.9 percent were female respondents. The age ranged from 19 until 24 years old. There were altogether 45.3 percent respondents were within the age 21 to 22 years old and 35.6 percent were in between 19 to 20 years old. 19.1 percent were those who are within 23 to 24 years old. As for the total respondents based on location, UiTM Shah Alam had the highest of 33.4 percent, followed by UiTM Puncak Perdana with 23.3 percent. Based on the population, respondents from UM had the lowest with 4.3 percent with only 44 students chosen as samples.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Respondents Demographic Percentage (n=1028)

Respondents Demography		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	313	30.4
	Female	715	69.9
Age	19-20 years	366	35.6
	21-22 years	466	43.3
	23-24 years	196	19.1
Mean = 1.8346			
Standard Deviation = .72101			
Universities	UM	44	4.3
	UPM	132	12.8
	UKM	134	13.0
	UIA	135	13.1
	UiTM Shah Alam	343	33.4
	UiTM Puncak Perdana	240	23.3

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between personal factor, environment factor and behaviour factor with the level of film exposure among the audience.

Research results (Table 2) show that there is a moderately strong positive relationship between the personal factor ( $r = 0.413$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and film exposure. In addition, there is also a positive but weak relationship between the environment factor ( $r = 0.321$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and behaviour factor ( $r = 0.288$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) with film exposure. This means that film exposure has a relationship with the SCT reciprocal model. Research results show that the SCT reciprocal model may play a role in the dependent variable, film exposure. A significant positive relationship between the personal factor, environment factor and behaviour factor proves that the SCT is a media effect theory which has an effect on the level of film exposure among the audience.

Research results show the importance of educating the film audience by the proven relationship of the SCT reciprocal model. The media message is a factor which influences and creates a learning and observation process. A person may observe the behaviour of an individual involved in media and put it into practice in his life (Severin & Tankard, 2010; Miller, 2005).

Table 2. Correlation Coefficient between Reciprocal Model Factors

Variable	Personal Factor	Environment Factor	Behaviour Factor	Film Exposure
Personal Factor	1.00 (0.00)			
Environment Factor	0.612 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)		
Behaviour Factor	0.388 (0.00)	0.481 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)	
Film Exposure	0.413 (0.00)	0.321 (0.00)	0.288 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Thus, if the individual is always exposed to excessive media influence, the tendency to accept whatever from the media is high. In associating SCT with film media influence, Bandura (2004) discusses behavioural change through the social model. According to Bandura (2001), learning through the media is a new style of learning behaviour. Media may have an influence because the construction of human social reality depends much on what is directly viewed, seen and read from their experiences. Therefore, this research accepts the stated hypothesis and it can be reported that the three reciprocal models factors have a relationship with film exposure.

This means that for the personal factor, if an individual has a good assumption and knowledge of a film, then his level of exposure to that film becomes increasingly higher. Likewise, the environment factor, which takes into account the model representation and existing social norms in a local community, may influence the way of choosing to view a film. This is because if the acting in a film is by an actor he finds interesting, then the desire to watch the film becomes increasingly higher. As for the behaviour factor, the higher the action and desire of the audience to watch it, the higher the film exposure. Thus, this reciprocal model explains the triadic relationship of the three determinant factors which may shape behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: Personal factor, environment factor and behaviour factor are predictive factors which influence the level of film exposure among an audience.

Regression analysis in this research determines the predictive factors of film exposure among an audience. Table 3 shows the reciprocal model of Social Cognitive Theory as a contributory factor to adolescent audience who expose themselves to films they view. Research results find that the personal and behaviour factors contribute 18.9 % variance to film exposure, whereas hypothesis test of the environment factor shows it is insignificant to film exposure.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Film Exposure based on Reciprocal Model Factor.

Model	Regression		
	$\beta$	t	$p$
Personal Factor	0.355	11.644	0.000
Environment Factor	0.057	1.522	0.128
Behaviour Model	0.150	4.935	0.000
1	$\Delta R^2=0.170$		
2	$\Delta R^2=0.189$		
		F=120.348	$p=0.000$

Based on research results, two predictive factors, i.e., personal and behaviour factors contribute significantly. This means that both these factors of the Reciprocal Model also increase the level of film exposure among the audience. Further, the multiple regression test which uses the stepwise method significantly shows that the personal factor contributes 17 % variance ( $\Delta R^2=0.170$ ) to film exposure. This shows that the audience's personal factor ( $\beta=.355$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) is the main predictor in the SCT Reciprocal Model factor which influences film viewing exposure among respondents.

From the above Beta value, the behaviour factor contributes only a little to the level of film exposure ( $\beta=0.057$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This means that the behaviour factor is not the best factor which may be linked to film exposure, that is, almost 2% variance only. In other words, there are other factors not discussed in this research which are the main predictive factors influencing the level of film exposure.

Hence, research results show that the individual personal factor closely related to the cognitive process may influence the behaviour of the individual himself. Learning through observation, the individual is able to think and evaluate a behaviour which he wishes to learn and imitate through the processes of paying attention, remembering, replication and motivation. However, motivation and reinforcement are not the only factors which may determine making a decision. Decision-making also depends on the behaviour of the audience themselves.

This can be seen when an individual also learns from modeling found within the sphere of his environment such as parents, family members, peers as well as artistes and celebrities who attract his attention (Bandura, 2001; Bandura, 1978; Bandura & Jeffery, 1973). Nevertheless, a high self-efficacy (Bandura, 2005; Bandura, 1994; Bandura, 1977) within the individual also plays a role in controlling the environment factor. This means that even though the individual is in a less impressive environment, it is possible to produce good behaviour uninfluenced by the environment factor if his self-efficacy is high.

The results of the partial correlation test and the multiple regression test show that there is a relationship and significant contribution of predictive factors which enable the researcher to accept the hypothesis stated. This means that this research contributes to the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The partial correlation test conducted contributes as a prediction in forming a research hypothesis which may explain the phenomena occurring through the relationship between the research variables. This argument rests on the opinion of Noraini (2010) who states that even though correlation study cannot be used to determine the causes, it is still important to be conducted to predict and explain if a consistent relationship exists between the variables.



## 7. Conclusion

As a Social Cognitive Theory construct which promotes observational learning, the contribution of learning through observation corresponds with the function of film as a medium which may affect the audience. Hence, the viewer learns through what he observes from everything he is shown, directly and indirectly. This will affect changes in the film audience, whether in terms of cognitive, affective or even behaviour.

This research contributes to the discovery of research variables which may be associated with the Social Cognitive Theory. The research variables used are the reciprocal model factor comprising of the personal, environment and behaviour factors as independent variables, and film exposure as a dependent variable. Research results show a significant relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Further, the personal and environment factors are significant predictive factors to film exposure among the audience. These findings succeed in strengthening the Social Cognitive Theory framework which relates this theory to research on media effects.

The findings of the research see that there are significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The findings manage to strengthen the theoretical framework used-social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986) that links the theory with some media effects. Other than that, this research strengthens the points about social cognitive theory through media towards positive behavior like some previous research conducted by Udornpim & Singhal (1999) and Dumova (2006).

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